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Date: March 22, 2005

Signup for USDA's Conservation Security Program It Rewards Your Land Stewardship

LAKEWOOD, CO - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns recently announced a nationwide signup for the USDA Conservation Security Program (CSP). CSP is managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is designed to reward farmers for long-term stewardship. **The Program is part of the 2002 Farm Bill and landowners with property within Colorado's 3 CSP watersheds can signup for 2005 CSP funding from March 28, 2005 - May 27, 2005.**

Landowners *can* and *should* familiarize themselves with Colorado's 13 watersheds by visiting www.co.nrcs.usda.gov. If the majority of one's property is not within the CSP watershed that landowner is not eligible for 2005 CSP funding.

Nationally, 220 watersheds were identified for the 2005 CSP signup to participate in the historic new program. CSP was introduced last summer in 18 watersheds nationwide. None of which were in Colorado. In this first opportunity for farmers from each state to participate, about one eighth of the Nation's eligible farmers will be given the chance to apply.

"This program allows us to reward the sound conservation work many of our farmers and ranchers have been doing over the years," said Allen Green, NRCS State Conservationist, Lakewood, Colorado. *"It represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs as these financial incentives are focused toward demonstrable long-term land stewardship."*

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment, as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

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Green, goes on to say that *“while protecting soil and water quality are the prerequisites for program participation, landowners will also have options to: improve wildlife habitat, undertake on-farm energy conservation, improve air quality, participate in environmental monitoring, participate in watershed-wide stewardship programs, and improve nutrient and pest management activities.”*

CSP will continue to be offered each year, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds as funding allows. The 2005 application process is open to approximately 235,000 farmers and ranchers within the 220 watersheds. For additional information regarding CSP and to see the Colorado watershed boundaries please visit our website at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov.

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